on constant interaction with trade, industry and export promotion organisations.

Problems of Rubber Growers in Kerala

465. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the problems of the rubber growers of Kerala;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the impact of the Exim Policy on these growers; and

(d) what steps are proposed to be taken to mitigate their hardships?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Due to the fall in consumption of Natural Rubber by the user industries, the price of natural rubber has been witnessing a dowanward trend since 1996.

(c) As per the current EXIM Policy, import of natural rubber is in the Negative List and is allowed only against Advance Licence/Special Import Licence. However, there is no restriction on the export of natural rubber.

(d) In order to arrest the decline in rubber prices and to provide a remunerative price to the rubber planters, Government had instituted a market intervention operation through STC for procurement of 10,000 MT of Natural Rubber on Government Account. The Government has recently decided to procure an additional quantity of 20000 MT.

Impact of Exim Policy on Fishermen

466. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation about the impact of Exim Policy on the traditional fishermen of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the impact of the policy on the export of marine products; and

(d) how Government propose to enhance the export of these products?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The Government has not received any specific representation about the impact of EXIM Policy on the traditional fishermen of the country. However, the problems faced by the seafood processing industry were discussed and the suggestions made by the industry are under consideration.

(c) Precise impact of the recently announced Policy on sea food processing and export would be known only after some time but Govt. expects that the export target fixed will be met.

(d) Government has provided the following facilities under EXIM Policy for enhancing the export of marine products;

(i) Encouraging ecofriendly sustainable aqua culture through various development schemes;

(ii) Encouraging deversified fishing to step up export of commercially important underexploited species;

(iii) Encouraging better utilization of scarce raw-materials for production of value added marine products which can fetch higher unit value;

(iv) Encouraging modernisation of the existing processing plants;

(v) Allowing raw materials and packing materials duty free when used in the export of fish and sifh products.

(vi) Notifying the DEPB (Duty Entitlement Pass Book) rates applicable on the export of fish and fish products.

(vii) Reduction of the threshold value of Zero duty EPCG Scheme from Rs. 20 Crores to Rs. 1 Crore which should enable SSI and medium seafood processing units to procure essential machinry duty free at globally competitive prices.

India's Share of Export

467. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) India's share of export in the International market;

(b) the reasons for India's low share; and

(c) the steps proposed to boost export;

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) India's

share of export in the international market was 0.6% in 1997. The policy of import substitution followed prior to liberalisation was largely responsible for this low share.

(c) Export performance is influenced *inter-alia* by international market conditions supporing infrastructural facilities, credit availability and policy framework. The Government is taking all necessary steps to see that there is a steady increase in the growth of exports. Export promotion is a continuous process and measures are being taken based on interaction with trade, industry and export promotion orgnisations.

Trade Between India and Erstwhile U.S.S.R.

468. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the annual trade between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union before its disintegration;

(b) the value of trade between India and the countries of erst-while Soviet Union during 1996–97;

(c) whether it is a fact that there has been decline in the trade;

(d) if so, the main items in which the decline in trade has occurred; and

(e) the steps taken to increase trade between India and these countries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The value of trade between India and erstwhile Soviet Union during 1990-91 was Rs. 7803 crores.

(b) The value of trade between India and CIS and Baltic countries during 1996-97 was Rs. 5829 crores.

(c) and (d) Yes Sir, there was a decline in trade with the countries of erstwhile Soviet Union during 1996-97 as compared to the trade with Soviet Union before its disintegration. The main items in which the decline in trade has occurred include tea, coffee, cashew, cosmetics and toiletries, chemicals, pulp and waste paper, cotton raw and waste, fertilizers manufactured, iron and steel, etc.

(e) The Government has initiated several measures for boosting Indo-CIS trade. These measures include regular review of trade between India and the countries of this region through meetings of Joint Commission, Working Groups and Joint business councils, encouraging consignment sales and opening of warehouses; broad-basing the basket of tradable goods, signing of agreements, opening of India banks, participation in trade fairs and exhibitions and exchange of delegations.

Software Exports to Japan

469. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total value of the software exports to Japan during the years 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98;

(b) whether there is any steady increase in the volume of exports to Japan during these four years; and

(c) what further steps are being contemplated to continue this trend so as to increase the software exports not only to Japan but also to the entire South East Asian Markets?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The total value of software exports to Japan during the last 4 years has been as under:-

Year	Rs. in Cr.
1994-95	46
1995-96	53
1996-97	109
1997-98	185 (estimated)

(b) Yes, Sir. There has been a steady increase in the value of exports to Japan during the last 4 years. The growth over the previous years has been as under:-

Year	%Growth
1994-95	76.9
1995-96	15.2
1996-97	105.6
1997-98	69.7

(c) The Council has undertaken various promotional activities to boost export to South